



UNITED STATES SENATE
**REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE**

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Where's the Budget?

“A Dramatic Failure”

Only once in the modern budget era has the Congress failed to pass a budget resolution conference report. That was 1998. Both the Senate and the House did pass their own resolutions but members failed to produce a conference report. In its place, Congress agreed to a so-called “deeming resolution” – establishing discretionary spending limits and permitting Congress to finish its work on the appropriations bills. Here’s what two key Democrats had to say about this at the time.

Senator Tom Daschle:

The budget resolution was due in April. So far, neither body has delivered a budget resolution. So I call upon the Republican leadership in the House and in the Senate to do what the law requires, to do what is so essential to restore confidence, to do what really is required to set the framework for the priorities and the commitments that we must make in these next six weeks. I call on the Republican leadership to pass a budget resolution.

– Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), August 31, 1998

Senator Kent Conrad:

We have no budget resolution passed by this Congress. For the first time in 24 years, there has been a failure to pass a budget resolution. That budget resolution was due by April 15. The President plays no role in a budget resolution; that is the responsibility of this Congress. . . . It is purely the responsibility of this Senate and the House of Representatives, and these bodies have failed in their responsibility, and they have failed for the first time in 24 years.

It is easy to blame the President for everything in this town, but when it comes to a failure to pass a budget resolution, it is not the President's fault. The fault lies right here, right here in the U.S. Senate and at the other end of this building in the House of Representatives. It was our responsibility to pass a budget resolution. It was our obligation to pass a budget resolution. That is the blueprint that is to be followed in order to coordinate all of the appropriations bills.

. . . In fact, most of the appropriations bills have not been passed. . . . That is the failure of this Congress. . . .

The budget resolution is just that – it is a resolution by both Houses of Congress. It is our responsibility to pass a budget resolution, and this Congress has failed.

For the first time in 24 years, there is no budget resolution. The Senate passed a budget resolution, but the Republicans in the House and the Republicans in the Senate could never agree, and so for months the appropriations bills were delayed. So here we are at the start of a new fiscal year – no budget, no appropriations bills, and we are sitting here wondering how it is going to end. . . .

. . . This Congress has failed to meet every single budget deadline. In fact, for the first time in 24 years, they have produced no budget. . . . I do not know many families that never bother to come up with a budget, but that is what has happened here under the leadership of our friends on the other side of the aisle. For the first time in 24 years, there is no budget – none. That is their failure, not the President's failure. It is their failure.

. . . Here we are with a Republican-controlled Congress who has failed to even write a budget. That is the most basic responsibility of any Congress, to write a budget. This Congress, under Republican control, has failed in that most basic duty for the first time in 24 years. Why? Because the Republicans in the U.S. Senate who did pass a budget resolution – we passed it on a bipartisan basis – could never get together with the Republicans in the House of Representatives. So what we have is a colossal failure.

I don't know how else to say it, but this is mismanagement on a grand scale. I hope people will remember what the record is because it does make a difference. . . .

Our friends on the other side who are now in control are responsible for a dramatic failure, a failure to write a budget for the United States of America. The result is, here we are, the new fiscal year has started, we have no budget, half the appropriations bills aren't done, they will all be rolled into a stack of paper that will be probably 3 feet high, it will be slammed on our desks, and we will be told to vote on it 3 hours later.

What a way to govern. What a way to manage. . . . A budget resolution is the distinct responsibility of the Congress. This Congress has failed.

– Senator Conrad (D-ND), *Congressional Record*, October 12, 1998

Now that Memorial Day is behind us, it seems Senator Conrad may not even try to get his budget, or any budget, through the U.S. Senate. This is an unprecedented failure, and it comes at a time when spending is on the rise and nearly every budget enforcement mechanism available has expired. Given the soaring rhetoric Senator Conrad used in 1998 to describe the budgetary situation, what more can be said about his own budget leadership this year?